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THE PORTUGUESE IN THE TRACK OF COLUMBUS (1493).¹

BY DR. P. J. J. VALENTINI.

FROM no one else was it more natural to expect a map of the discoveries made in the New World between the years 1492-1504, than from Columbus, the discoverer himself.

In these twelve years he had sailed four times to the Western Indies. The group of the Antilles and the chief outlines of the Caribbean coast had been first unveiled by him in person.

He could not therefore have been in want of inner prompting, of official invitation or of material for giving some illustrations of the work he had achieved. Nor was he deficient in technical ability, since it is related that for a long time he earned his daily bread in Portugal by drawing maps.

Nevertheless the researches made to find a chart drawn by his own hand, or any accredited copy of such a chart, have been without success, and after endeavoring to ferret out from written history any suggestion of his having ever been really engaged in such kind of work we are led to the conclusion that, in this direction, our expectations are hopeless.

If we begin by making inquiry about this matter of the contemporary writers, we shall find ourselves limited to a single passage of Peter Martyr,² in which this stu-

¹ Copyright, 1888, by P. J. J. Valentini.

² *Petr. Martyr, Ed.* 1574, *Dec.* 2, *Lib.* 10, page 200. In the translation of R. Eden, London, 1577, on page 92.

dious chronicler speaks of a Portuguese chart on which he had seen Columbus' discoveries noted. "Columbus also,"—so he writes,—“made the beginning of a similar chart and with the help of his brother Bartholomeo ; but the charts made by *Cosa* and *Morales* are the only useful ones.” As to the Portuguese chart mentioned, it has been recently discovered, and will form the subject of our special discussion to follow. The *Cosa*-chart has been in the hands of all students since 1812. But the *Morales*-chart, if such a one ever was separately drawn, appears to have been lost. The passage, as a whole, however, reveals the fact that Columbus must have attempted some such work, yet accomplished nothing of consequence, or worthy of preservation.

If we make inquiry of Columbus himself, we shall find him remarkably silent on this point. Fond of writing as he otherwise is, not one significant word escapes him as to the beginning or the completion of a work which would nowadays appear to us as an almost imperative duty for so successful a discoverer as he was. His reports and letters contain only a few rare and incidental remarks referring to what were then called “*pinturas* and *cartas de marear*.”

Columbus, however, must not be presumed to have been totally unconscious of a duty connected with his vocation as a first explorer. On the contrary, at least at the beginning of his career, he shows himself deeply impressed with such a duty. He has a clear idea of the extraordinary opportunities afforded him, and also of the extraordinary obligations they involved. His ambition is not only that of an impetuous discoverer—he wishes also to outshine all his predecessors in cosmographic

illustrations, and pledges himself to come back with a new map drawn by his hand of the western ocean and the new islands and countries contained therein. A promise so solemn as this he gave, and we may find it at the conclusion of a letter written to his sovereigns, on the eve of his second voyage.¹ It runs thus: "Moreover, Sovereign Princes, besides describing every night the occurrences of the day, and every day those of the preceding night, I intend to draw up a new nautical chart, which shall contain the several parts of the ocean and land, in their proper distinction as the compass shows, and also to compose a book to represent the whole by picture, with latitudes and longitudes. On all which accounts it behooves me to abstain from sleep and make many trials in navigation, which things will demand much labor."

There is no doubt that the first of these promises, to keep the ship's journal with the utmost accuracy, was observed by the Admiral. The original draft made of it on board the ship is lost; perhaps it was destroyed by himself. No matter; this record must have served him for elaborating, soon after his return, an extensive report, a copy of which he sent to the king, who acknowledged its receipt and says that he has read it. At the same time, however, he complains that Columbus has left him without the two charts promised, so that he does not know in what direction by the compass the new islands are to be reached and under what degree they were

¹ *Navarrete, Col. de viajes, Tom. I.* page 1, 2, 3. These pages contain the *Prólogo* to Columbus's book, which *prólogo* was left unabridged by Las Casas, and in Columbus's original wording; while the following pages, which contain the *Relacion del 1º viage* are only Las Casas's abstract made from the original text.

found to be situated. It appears that on the first complaint made by the king, Columbus excused himself for not being ready yet. Whether or not the charts were ready on the 5th of Sept., 1493, or delivered between this date of the second request¹ and that of the 25th

¹ Columbus's writings are not of the best Castilian standard, but oftentimes of hybrid wording and syntax. At this place, however, there is not much doubt about what he intends to express. He wishes to work out a complete chart of the discoveries made and to be made, and to present two specimens of the same. The one is to be drawn up in the customary way, that is, to show in what relation the parts stand to the direction of the needle, and from this to prepare one of the so-called compass-charts, as they were furnished by the cosmographers and used by all the mariners of his time. The other specimen was to be an improvement upon the former. Columbus intended to represent the new islands and countries in conformity with their astronomical situation. This new method of map-projection had been often discussed at the court of Portugal, and Columbus had learned how to handle the quadrant and how to compute his longitude from lunar-eclipses by availing himself of the tables of Regiomontanus. It is in this light that we read the passage quoted, to which we should not have paid such close attention, if it had not attracted the notice and study of Mr. Ed. Breusing (see *Zeitschrift f. wiss. Geographie, Band II., Heft 4, Seite 190, 191*). Much as we are indebted to this distinguished scholar for the manifold instruction he has given us and the flood of light he has thrown upon the subject of mediæval navigation, we are sorry not to agree with him on the point he wishes to make in his article, by endeavoring to prove that whenever the Spaniards of the Columbian epoch employ the expression *carta de marear*, they mean by it the written book of *sailing instructions*. He could not select a passage more unfortunate for countenancing his statement than the one above mentioned. The words: *tengo propuesto de hacer carta nueva de navegar, en la cual situaré toda la mar y tierras del mar Océano, en sus propios lugares, debajo su viento*, express, without leaving any room for doubt, that he had in view to draw a new map, in which their proper situation should be given to the parts of the Ocean, and the whole be made up in the style of the usual compass charts, while the other map was to present itself in the new garb of parallels and meridians (por pintura por latitud del equinoccial y longitud del Occidente). Therefore, the passage shows just the reverse of what Mr. Breusing wanted to prove, and if summed up, contains: 1, the promise to keep the ship's journal; 2, to supersede the old compass-chart containing the sailing directions for the Atlantic islands, by drawing a new one, enriched with the results of the new discoveries to be made; 3, to incorporate the adventures of his voyage into a report (libro), this book to be accompanied, 4, by the illustration of another map, arranged according to meridians and parallels.

For the two letters of the King to Columbus, see *Coleccion de Documentos inc-*

Sept., on which he left Spain again, nothing in the correspondence showed, and it is but fair to suppose that on account of the enormous amount of business which pressed upon Columbus during those days, he was unable to finish the chart.

Further on, no mention of any *pintura* or *carta de marear* referring to the second voyage is to be found. Materials for mapping were on the increase. Columbus after this expedition might certainly have drawn up a sketch of a small archipelago. He had discovered considerable new portions of the islands of Cuba and Hayti, the islands of Jamaica and Porto Rico, and the northern chain of the Lesser Antilles.

The picture might have been made still more complete from the results of his third voyage, in which he had looked with wonder at the face of a new continent, when sailing along the tract of coast from the north of the Orinoco River to the Pearl-Islands. It is here we meet for the first and only time with Columbus's personal testimony to the fact that he drew a *pintura* of the new country. In the report to the king on his last achievements, he begs his majesty to be satisfied, for the present, with what he is able to write and with the enclosed picture of the country.¹

ditos, Madrid, 1882, Tom. xxxviii., page 221. Barcelona, Agosto 18 . . . "e acordad vos de dejarnos la carta de marear." Tom. id., page 240, the Queen to Columbus, Barcelona, Setiembre 5. . . "La Carta de marear que habiades de facer, si es acabada, me enwiad luego." The King to Columbus, of the same date, see Navarrete, C. d. V., Tom. ii., page 108: "Y porque para bien entender mejor este vuestro libro, habiamos menester saber los grados en que están las Islas y tierra que fallastes y los grados del camino por donde fuistes, por servicio nuestro que nos los enviéis luego; y asimesmo la carta que vos rogamos que nos enviádes antes de vuestra partida, nos enwiad luego muy cumplida, y escritos con ella los nombres."

¹ *Navarrete, C. d. V., Tom. i., page 264: "Entretanto yo enviaré á vuestras Altezas esta escriptura y la pintura de la tierra, y acordarán lo que en ello se deba facer."*

Now, if Columbus had resolved to put off his drawing of the new nautical chart to the time after his return from the third voyage, there were strong reasons why he should then have abandoned the whole idea. Juan de la Cosa, one of his former lieutenants, had hastened to anticipate him in such a work. Cosa's large map of the world had just then appeared (1500). The map not only contained Columbus's latest discoveries in the Caribbean Sea, but also Cosa's own explorations as far as the Gulf of Darien. What the jealous heart must have suffered from the publication of this splendid work, appears indirectly indeed, but plainly enough, from a letter of the 21st of August, 1501, written from Granada by Angelo Trevigiano to the patrician Domenico Malapirei in Venice.¹ "Columbus," writes Trevigiano, "is living here in this city poor, in great distress, and has fallen into complete disgrace with the monarch. I have requested him to draw a map of his discoveries for your Excellency. He referred me, however, to Palos, a seaport, where there are people enough that understand such things." We ask, was this curt refusal due to a want of time, to the feeling possibly of not being quite equal in technical training to the work, or to discretion towards his sovereign, or, perhaps, rather to injured pride? More or less, all of these reasons may have worked together. But, if there is still a doubt left in our mind as to what he positively meant by his refusal, his own words will disclose the truth as they stand written in the report he made to the King, dated Jamaica, 7th of July, 1503, after the completion of his fourth and last voyage.

¹ From *Ab. Placido Zurla : Di Marco Polo ed. a. Viaggiatori Veneziani, Venezia*, 1818, Vol. II., page 362, in note.

"Every tailor's apprentice," he exclaims, "ventures to approach the government now with a petition for a patent of discovery." And in another passage, "One of my crew may now come and tell where the province of Veragua is situated! All they know about it is that they went to a country where there is gold in abundance. The way back no one shall find again; it must be discovered anew." Columbus had imperiously demanded from his sailors their notes, journals and maps. He wanted to keep to himself that "great secret of the province of Veragua." He left no *pintura* or *carta de marear* of this last voyage. It was only by means of personal recollections, that some old pilots of Columbus were able to re-discover, in 1510, the coast of Veragua, to recognize the harbors and the rivers visited with him before and revive the names he had given them in 1502.¹

If, therefore, we may no longer count on such good fortune as the finding of a chart, upon which Columbus had noted down his discoveries either separately or all in one general view, we have lately and quite unexpectedly had some compensation for such a loss. Mr. Henry Harrisse, who has for years been working with great success in the department of bibliography of the Columbian epoch, has recently been fortunate enough to hit upon a great treasure. In the library of the Este family of Modena, he succeeded in digging out a large land and sea chart, containing a representation of all the dis-

¹ *G. Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés, Historia gen. y nat. d. l. Indias, Madrid, 1851-1857, Vol. II., Lib. xxviii., Cap. 1, page 467; and Herrera, Hist. gen. d. l. hechos d. l. Castellanos, Amberes, 1728, Tomo I., Dec. 1, Lib. iii., Cap. 2, page 172: "y dijo un marinero (Gregorio Ginovés) que se queria acordar de un puerto" . . . "y fué loado el marinero de hombre de buena memoria." Id., Cap. 1, page 71 . . . "y lo que mayor dolor les causava era no saber adonde Veragua estava."*

coveries made by the Portuguese in the Atlantic ocean down to the year 1502. Mr. Harrisse has had an exact fac-simile executed of this splendid map and has joined it to his work published on the Corte-Reales. Concerning the original we learn from a letter printed in this work that the chart was made at Lisbon in the year 1502, and at the request of the Duke Hercole di Ferrara, who wished to possess a complete representation of all the discoveries made in the Atlantic ocean down to that year. The letter and the chart show that this was secured for him by a certain Alberto Cantino.¹

This find is certainly to be regarded as one of the most fortunate that have ever been made in the department of cartography. The map must undoubtedly, as Mr. Harrisse very justly observes, be looked upon as one of the prototypes of those small and early representations of the New World, for which the Ptolemy Atlases of 1508 and 1513 became so celebrated. The same model was used by Schœner also in the year 1520. It must also be the same of which, as previously mentioned, Pet. Martyr spoke, and of which Am. Vespucci sent a copy to King René as an illustration of his "*Quattuor Navigationes*."

If the Cantino map does not furnish us with anything that is new within the compass of the first discoveries, it has the great advantage of presenting the old things in their authentic original and on the largest scale.

¹ See : *Les Corte-Real*, par M. Henri Harrisse, in Vol. III. of *Recueil des Voyages et de Documents, pour servir à l'Histoire de la Géographie, Depuis le XIII^e jusqu'à la fin du XVI^e siècle. Publié sous la direction de M. M. C. H. Schefer, membre de l'Institut et Henri Cordier*. For description and discussion of the Cantino map, see pages 52, 69-71, 87-90, 215. Compare also in Vol. I., H. Harrisse, *Jean et Sebastian Cabot*, pages 143-158.

Above all, we are now at last in a condition to examine the long-lost original drawing of that mysterious coast to the west of Cuba, of which the Ptolemies of 1508 and 1513 evidently give us but an imperfect sketch. The names of the rivers, lagoons and places can now be read in their original linguistic purity. In the light of this fact we are now able to study, in a more legitimate way, the often discussed problem, who the "*almirante*" really was, and to which nation, Spanish or Portuguese, he belonged, who between the years 1492 and 1508 succeeded in discovering a coast lying opposite the western cape of Cuba and stretching north as far as to the fiftieth degree. It has remained a puzzle to the students on what authority Ruysch, the editor of the 1508 Ptolemy, relied, when on an extra-sheet containing the first sketch ever drawn of the New Western World, he ventured to represent in the still further West a continental coast inscribed with the legend: *Huc Vsque Naves Ferdinandi Regis Hispaniæ Pervenerunt*. For so far as credit is to be given to written history, it was not till the year 1517 that the Spaniard Cordova discovered in the direction mentioned and at the place described the eastern coast of what is called Yucatan. In an edition of the Ptolemy (1513), the editors took care to present the interesting coast in a somewhat improved form. The scale was larger, the nomenclature more copious, the names themselves were given, not in Latin, as before, but in a kind of hybrid Spanish, and in Gothic type. In the preface was stated, that the original from which the copy had been taken, had been drawn up *per admiralem quondam serenissimi Portugalie regis Ferdinandi*. This statement was not less anomalous than the foregoing. Columbus had been

the only admiral created by and serving under King Ferdinand of Spain. He had remained unacquainted with the insular character of the island of Cuba, had never visited its western cape nor sailed beyond it to find to the westward a continent reaching to the far north. It were tedious to quote the host of learned disquisitions in which the attempt has been made to conciliate the two contradictory authorities, history and cosmography. No definite result was reached on any one point, either as to the nation which sent cruisers at that time to the west of Cuba, or as to the admiral who made the surveys, or as to the recognition in the mysterious coast of any portion of Central or North America. The names susceptible of interpretation did not afford the slightest suggestion as to the country to which they possibly pertained. But it would be unjust not to mention here the position which Mr. H. Harrisse has taken on the subject. He is the finder and the publisher of the Cantino map, and so far as our knowledge reaches he is also the latest of the critics who have discussed the question. He has brought to this task the whole amount and weight of his vast erudition. As always before, so here, and it is now a pleasure to follow him in his examination of the possibilities in the case, as to the country meant to be represented in the picture laid before our eyes, and the nationality and identity of its discoverer. Despite the mass of older materials at his disposal, and the additional find of the original chart copied by the Ptolemies, the result of Mr. Harrisse's investigation is only a negative one. He concludes that no one of the many navigators who are known to have sailed about those Western shores in those years can be presumed, with any show

of reason, to have been the discoverer. As to the coast itself, he sees in it a representation of the shores of the Mexican gulf, those of the peninsula of Florida, and in continuation those of the United States of America.¹

This conclusion surprised us, not so much on account of its tenor as for the very abrupt way in which it was stated. We expected Mr. HARRISSE to address himself to the examination of the long missing chart with the whole power of his wonted acuteness, to make it speak or yield up its secrets, and after having carefully gathered its utterances, to bind these into the bundle of a compact conclusion. He would thus have afforded to the student an insight into the logic of his statements. This he did not attempt to do. He seems to be almost regardless of the intrinsic importance of his treasure-trove. His eyes are open only to its exterior features. The description of them, indeed, is valuable, but Mr. HARRISSE points out no more than would have been detected, upon inspection, by any one else.

We have been brought to regard Mr. HARRISSE with feelings of respect and gratitude. The works he has published in the course of now fourteen years abound with new and correct information. He has succeeded in drawing from dry bibliography fresh fountains with which to quench the thirst of the historian and the geographer. His methods of research are exemplary. On

¹ Mr. HARRISSE's words run thus (see *C. Real*, page 87, chap. iv.: "Le littoral descend en une ligne presque perpendiculaire pour aboutir à une péninsule qui s'avance vers l'orient et se termine à la pointe occidentale de l'île de Cuba, dont elle n'est séparée que par une distance d'environ deux degrés. À l'ouest de ladite péninsule, on remarque une large échancrure, comprenant trois golfes. Il est impossible de ne pas reconnaître dans cette échancrure l'entrée du golfe du Mexique, dans cette péninsule la Floride, et dans la côte perpendiculaire le littoral des États Unis."

this occasion, however, he disappoints us. He ought to have presented us with reasons more palpable and more conclusive than those he has chosen to give for confining himself to the meagre statement of a merely personal opinion.

If, however, on the one hand, we are disappointed at the incompleteness which marks his examination of the chart, on the other hand we are gratified. He has left to other students an opportunity to complete his work—a chance rarely offered by him, and one which we now attempt to grasp.

After a close examination of the Cantino map we arrived at a result very different from that reached by Mr. Harrisse. In the coast west of Cuba we discern a representation of the peninsula of Yucatan, the three sides of which, however, the copyist felt compelled, for certain reasons, to straighten out into one single line. Of the twenty-two names, inscribed on the coast, two turn out to be indigenous names of localities well known to this day. Two other names refer to persons, dignitaries of the Portuguese crown. The remaining names are written in Portuguese. A further fact read on the face of the map is that the Portuguese crown kept a naval station in the Antilles, in a carefully concealed spot, undoubtedly to watch the progress of the Spanish discoveries. The reasons for so extraordinary a proceeding will be gathered from the contemporary history of the two kingdoms. The evidence, however, for the fact that the crown of Portugal really dispatched ships to the West Indies, and this immediately after Columbus's return from his first voyage, will be made clear from a correspondence between the King Ferdinand and Columbus.

444 *The Portuguese in the Track of Columbus.*

This is in brief a summary of the points to be discussed in the following pages. Each of these points is to be treated separately, and the story of the Portuguese ships sent out right in the track of Columbus's sailing route shall be first given.

(To be continued.)